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AUTHOR(S):

MISAWA, Nobuo

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The Influence of the Ottoman Print Media in Japan: The Linkage of Intellectuals in the Eurasian World

MISAWA Nobuo*

I. Introduction

The influence of the print media has continued to spread slowly but very extensively throughout the world. Before the *Meiji* Revolution (1868), due to the blockade policy of the *Tokugawa* Shogunate, the influence of foreign print media in Japan was limited to some European publications. Following the *Meiji* Revolution, many foreigners visited Japan and a large number of Japanese began to travel abroad. In the early days of the *Meiji* Era, the Japanese government sent the *IWAKURA* Mission to European countries and America. During their stay in Paris in 1873, the mission sent one of their agents, *Genichiro FUKUCHI*, to Istanbul with the famous Japanese Buddhist monk *Mokurai SHIMAJI*. In 1875, the Japanese Foreign Minister, *Masanori TERAJIMA*, ordered the Japanese consul in London, *Kagenori UENO*, to negotiate with the Ottoman consul to investigate the possibility of opening diplomatic relations. In 1876, two young Japanese officials, *Hiroshi NAKAI* and *Hiromoto WATANABE* carried out a short interview with the Ottoman Foreign Minister *Raşid Paşa* in Istanbul. They received some Ottoman law books as their official gifts. On March 12th, 1881, the members of the Japanese foreign mission, *Masaharu YOSHIDA* and *Nobuyoshi FURUKAWA* received an audience with the Ottoman Sultan *Abdülhamid II* at the royal palace of *Yıldız* in Istanbul. Thus Japan and the Ottoman Empire began diplomatic relations. After several visits by Japanese dignitaries, the Ottoman Sultan *Abdülhamid II* decided to send the frigate *Ertuğrul* to Japan in 1889. After a three-month stay, the *Ertuğrul* was sunk by a strong storm after leaving Yokohama on September 16th., 1890, and about 500 lives were lost.¹⁾ This tragedy is said to have been the starting point of the friendship between both countries, but the most significant turning point in the Ottoman state's recognition of Japan was the incredible Japanese victory over Russia in 1905. So many articles were published about it in the print media of the Islamic World that Ottoman intellectuals became very interested in Japan.²⁾

II. A Short History of the Ottoman Print Media

The Ottoman print media was developed in the 19th Century, but there was a famous pioneer in the 18th Century. It is well known that in 1729 the first book printed in Arabic using Western printing technology was produced by *İbrahim Müteferrika* (1674-1745). Unfortunately his printing house, the "*Müteferrika Press*" had to close after publishing only 23 books. Over one hundred years passed before newspapers and magazines were firmly established in the Ottoman Empire.

In 1831, the Ottoman Government decided to publish its official newspaper, *Takvim-i Vekayi*.

* Associate Professor, Toyo University

1) For details of this tragedy, see The Special Committee for the Preservation of Lessons about Disasters, the Japanese Prime Ministry 2005.

2) We can find various examples about the influences of the Japanese victory over Russia, not only in the Ottoman Empire but also Egypt, Iran, and so on. See Sugita 1995, Komatsu 2007, Esenbel 2008.

Later in 1849, the first magazine, *Vekayi-i Tıbbiye* was published. In the second half of the 19th Century, in 1860, the first private newspaper, *Tercüman-ı Ahvâl* was established; and in 1862, the popular science magazine *Mecmu'a-i Fünun* was established.³⁾ It was in this way that, just before *Meiji* Revolution in Japan, the print media of the Ottoman Empire was born and quickly grew to be an influential force among the people.

III. The Three Main Phases in the Ottoman Print Media

There are many academic studies about the Ottoman print media.⁴⁾ From the viewpoint of modern history, it is possible to identify three main phases related to the three intellectual movements that flourished up until the end of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the Turkish Republic. In the other words, the Ottoman print media played an important role in supporting the three major intellectual movements. The first was the “Modernization Movement”, the second the “Turkish Nationalism Movement”, and the third the “Islamic Movement”.

The declaration of the “*Tanzimat* Reformation” at *Gülhane* Park in 1839 stimulated the “Modernization Movement” which promoted Western Style reforms, such as the enactment of a constitution and the establishment of a national assembly. Some of the Ottoman intellectuals tried to realize such aims through the print media. *İbrahim Şinasi* (1826–1871) was the pioneer of this movement, and he influenced public opinion through his articles in the magazine *Tasvir-i Efkar*. This magazine published 830 issues (June 17, 1862–August 27, 1871 [30 Zilhicce 1278–15 Haziran 1287]).⁵⁾ *Namık Kemal* (1849–1888) was the most famous representative of this movement and his dramas and novels stimulated popular thought. Later, due to oppression by the Ottoman sultanate, he was obliged to flee to England. However, while in exile in London, he published a weekly magazine called *Hürriyet* to inspire the Modernization Movement in the Ottoman Empire. This famous magazine published 100 issues (1868–1870 [1285–1287]). We can find many influential examples (books, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers and so on) of the Ottoman print media published by Ottoman intellectuals living in exile in Europe, like *Namık Kemal*. It was by means of the print media that Ottoman intellectuals who criticized the Ottoman Sultan *Abdülhamid II* were able to increase their influence, even while exiled in Europe.

It is very interesting that a modernization movement was initiated both in Japan and in the Ottoman Empire at the same time. However, regarding these modernization movements, it is not possible to find evidence of the Ottoman print media’s effect on Japan, or the effects of the Japanese print media on the Ottoman Empire. These modernization movements were a synchronic phenomenon between the east and west edges of the Eurasian Continent.

The second phase was the “Turkish Nationalism Movement”. Many leading figures of this movement made use of the Ottoman Print Media. Among them, perhaps *Mehmet Akif Ersoy* (1873–

3) For general information about the history of the Ottoman print media, see Nüzhet 1931. Recently IRCICA in Istanbul published the complete reproduction of *Takvim-i Vekayi* as a CD-ROM edition.

4) Owing to Prof. Masami ARAI work, such as Arai 1995, we can get the information about the trends of the academic studies about this field.

5) For detailed information about this magazine, see Hayta 2002.

1936) and *Abdullah Cevdet* (1869–1932) were the most famous ideologists. It is well known that both of them were impressed by the Japanese victory over Russia. From the viewpoint of the spread of the Ottoman print media to the Eurasian World, there is the important intellectual activist, *Ayaz İshaki* (1878–1954), who printed many publications during the foundation period of the Turkish Republic. He was a Tatar born in the Russian area, and became an activist of the *İdil-Ural* Movement, the Great Turkish Nationalism Movement. Although he is not as famous among the Ottoman literary figures as *Mehmet Akif* or *Abdullah Cevdet*, his worldwide activity stimulated the Turkish Nationalism Movement. In European countries and Japan, he contributed to the organization of Tatar Turkish exiles through the establishment of the Tatar Turkish media. Recognising the power of the print media in the Ottoman Empire, he published the Tatar Turkish magazine *Yana Milli Yul* in Berlin, and the Tatar Turkish newspaper *Milli Bayrak* in Mukden, which was the main city in occupied China.⁶⁾

The third phase was the “Islamic Movement”. Being parallel with the two movements mentioned above, the Islamic Movement also owed its development to the Ottoman print media. There were many important leaders in this movement. Among them, *Abdürreşid İbrahim* (1857–1944) had a very unique career.⁷⁾ Impressed by the outcome of the Russo-Japanese War, he visited Japan seeking assistance to overcome Russian oppression in the Tatar Turkish area. In the past 10 years, due to the translation into Japanese of his travel book about Japan, he has been reevaluated in this country. He was not an Ottoman citizen, but a Tatar Turkish intellectual in Russia. At the beginning of the 20th Century, he traveled to Egypt, Syria, Europe, Central Asia, Mongolia, Manchuriya, Japan, Korea, China, India, the Hijaz and the Ottoman Empire. In Istanbul, he published his travel book in two volumes under the title as *Alem-i İslam ve Japonya’da İntişar-ı İslamiyet* in 1910–14, and simultaneously began publishing a weekly magazine under the title *Tearıf-i Müslimin*, one of the influential magazines of the Islamic Movement in those days. This magazine published 32 issues (April 15, 1910–February 1, 1911[2 Nisan–19 Kanun-i sani, 1326]).⁸⁾ He soon became famous as one of the opinion leaders of the Islamic Movement through the media field. Before World War II, he moved from Istanbul to Japan, where he lived until he died in Tokyo in 1944.

Sırat-ı Müstakim (in the later period its name was changed to *Sebiürreşad*) was the most important magazine of the Islamic Movement in the Ottoman Empire of those days. This magazine published 641 issues (November 3, 1908–March 5, 1925([21 Ağustos 1324–25 Mart 1341])).⁹⁾ We can find some of his articles in this magazine. He conceived the possibility of converting Japan into a Muslim country, and utilizing her power to resist the oppression of Muslims in Russia.

6) Unfortunately we can not find a complete collection of *Milli Bayrak*, but the collection of Prof. Shiro Hattori at the University of Shimane has the majority them. Recently, an academic project for their research and reproduction has been started. See Usmanova 2005, 2006, 2007, “Constructing a Database for Relations between Japan and Islam” Project, supported by JSPS [No.17201050] & Media Center, University of Shimane(eds.) 2008.

7) Türkoğlu 1993, Özbek 1994, 1995a. It is difficult to set down his actual career from historical sources. The most reliable study about his career is Komatsu 2008.

8) Today, the influence of this magazine on Islamic Movements has begun to be reevaluated. See Özbek 1994, 1995b.

9) According to Ceyhan 1991, we can easily get detailed information about this magazine. In Japan, although the collection was incomplete, its reproduction as a CD-ROM edition was carried out. See “A basic study about the computerization of the texts in Asian languages” Project supported by TOYO University (ed.) 2008.

IV. The Spread of the Influence of The Ottoman Print Media to Japan

How did the effect of the Ottoman print media spread to Japan? Actually, Japan does not belong to the Islamic World, but from the second half of the 19th Century onwards, we must admit that Islam had various effects on Japan. For example, Islam, through its Pan-Asian Movement, had many effects on our “Great Asian Movement”. As mentioned above, the “Turkish Nationalism Movement” and the “Islamic Movement” were expanded into Japan by some activists, such as *Abdürreşid İbrahim* and *Ayaz İshaki*. They had splendid publisher’s careers in the Ottoman and the Tatar Turkish print media. In the other words, they knew the power and influence of the print media well and made good use of it. *Abdürreşid İbrahim* approached *Takeyoshi OHARA*, one of the leading activists of the Great Asian Movement in Japan, and they established their organization *AJIA GIKAI* together. They began to publish their official Japanese magazine *DAITO* (=the Great East) in Tokyo.¹⁰⁾ *Abdürreşid İbrahim* contributed to preparing and establishing the message of this magazine in the Tatar Turkish language, and sent some newsletters to it from Istanbul. Furthermore, he ordered his son, *Münir İbrahim*, to study in a Japanese University. In Tokyo, *Münir İbrahim* wrote some articles in both *DAITO* and *Sırat-ı Müstakim*. In this way, the Japanese print media and the Ottoman print media were connected.

As mentioned above, the Japanese activists of “the Great Asian Movement” had a strong intention to utilize the foreign activists of the “Islamic Movement” for their own purpose. In the same way, these Japanese activists began to approach the Tatar activists of the “Nationalism Movement”. On the other hand, some Tatar activists needed Japan’s assistance for their movement against Russian oppression. Thus both their interests were in accord. Among these Tatar activists, *Kurban Galiev* (1892–1972) stands out. He was of Bashkir Tatar origin, exiled to Japan from Manchuria.¹¹⁾ The Japanese activists of “the Great Asian Movement” assisted him very well. He wrote some Japanese articles published in the Japanese print media, and later became the owner of his own Arabic language publishing company. Then, in 1928, *Mustafa Kemal* of the Turkish Republic prohibited the printing of any Turkish publication in Arabic characters. Due to this fortunate opportunity, *Galiev* was able to purchase second-hand Arabic printing machines at a low price from the Turkish Republic, and established the *Islamic Printing House in Tokyo*, in 1930. He started by publishing the first Arabic Holy Quran to be printed in Japan in 1934. He also published some books, and a magazine titled “*Yapon Mohbiri*” (its name was later changed to “*Yani Yapon Mohbiri*”) in the Tatar Turkish language. In this way, the Ottoman print media, the Tatar print media and the Japanese print media were unified.

At the same time, *Ayaz İshaki* visited to Japan. He differed from *Kurban Galiev* in the way that he cooperated with the Japanese activists of “the Great Asian Movement”. He sought his own independent way, and established his own printing house. *Ayaz İshaki* established the Tatar Turkish newspaper *Milli Bayrak* in Mukden. This lead to a severe conflict between them, and eventually *Ayaz*

10) Although there is no complete collection of this magazine in Japan, the reproduction as a CD-ROM edition was carried out. See, Asian Research Center, Asian Cultures Research Institute, Toyo University (ed.) 2008.

11) For the general information about *Kurban Galiev*, see Matsunaga 1999, 2008, Nishiyama 2006, Dündar 2006, 2008.

İshaki left Japan, and *Kurban Galiev* was expelled to Manchuria by the Japanese Government. Then the Japanese activists of “the Great Asian Movement” invited *Abdürreşid İbrahim* to come to Japan again and to be their partner as the leader of both the Islamic Movement and the Tatar Nationalism Movement. In this way, Japan entered into the World War II.

V. Conclusion

During the interwar period, the influence of the Ottoman print media spread to Japan. The Japanese activists of “the Great Asian Movement” welcomed this situation. They wished to utilize these foreign publishers for their own purposes. Of course, on the other hand, the foreign activists also had a strong intention to utilize Japan for their own purposes.

Further academic research about this situation is required. As well as the influence of the Ottoman and Tatar Turkish print media, Japan was influenced by other countries’ print media in the interwar period. For example, we must pay attention to one of the famous Indian Muslim political exiles in Japan, named *Moulavi Barakatullah* (1856–1927), who wrote some articles in *DAITO*.¹² He published the English language magazine entitled *Islamic Fraternity* in Tokyo for a while with an Egyptian Muslim named *Ahmad Fadli* (1874–?). This magazine is evidence of the existence of the Islamic print media in Japan.

There were various intellectuals, both foreign and Japanese, in Japan during the interwar period, who sought the linkage of intellectuals in the Eurasian World through the print media.

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12) See Suzuki 1987. He taught Hindi Language at Tokyo Foreign Language School.

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